

Women's Concerns

Report

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Women Struggling in the Church

In my work with MCC Canada Women's Concerns desk I have had opportunity to meet many Mennonite women. Struggle in the church is a theme which surfaces again and again, and cuts across generations and conference lines.

For many women struggle in the church has to do with stepping out of traditional roles. The question of woman's place in the church is not new. The turn-of-the-century revivalist movement inspired many Mennonite women to become involved in missionary societies or sewing circles, both at home and abroad. The sewing circle, which today seems confining to some women, grew out of women's desire to participate in mission and drew them out of the privacy of family life. It provided them with the institutional means to lead and organize the public work of the church.

In more recent times the role of women in the church has again been in profound transition. Many women continue to serve faithfully in the now traditional sphere of the sewing circle while many others are experiencing a new sense of mission. Whether it is the result of a Christian feminist consciousness or an individual sense of God's calling, many women are now moving into such leadership roles as pastor, church chair and leadership positions in church institutions.

As was the case with the emergence of the sewing circle, so today women moving into new roles has been met with resistance. This resistance varies from conference to conference and indeed from congregation to congregation, but it is nevertheless present—sometimes as a minor impediment, other times as a seemingly insurmountable and alienating barrier. And it is here where the struggles for many women become most acute.

This issue of *Women's Concerns Report* is devoted to hearing some of the voices of struggle. As the articles arrived I was moved by the diversity of the experiences. For Nadine Friesen the barriers to her exercise of pastoral gifts have paled in the face of a strong sense of divine calling. Lorraine Roth responds to barriers on the mission field with a sense of humor and a strong sense of self sufficiency. Pat Swartzen-druber reflects on recovering from the dangers of ongoing victimization in the face of conflict. Linda Matties challenges the church to fully embrace the leadership gifts of

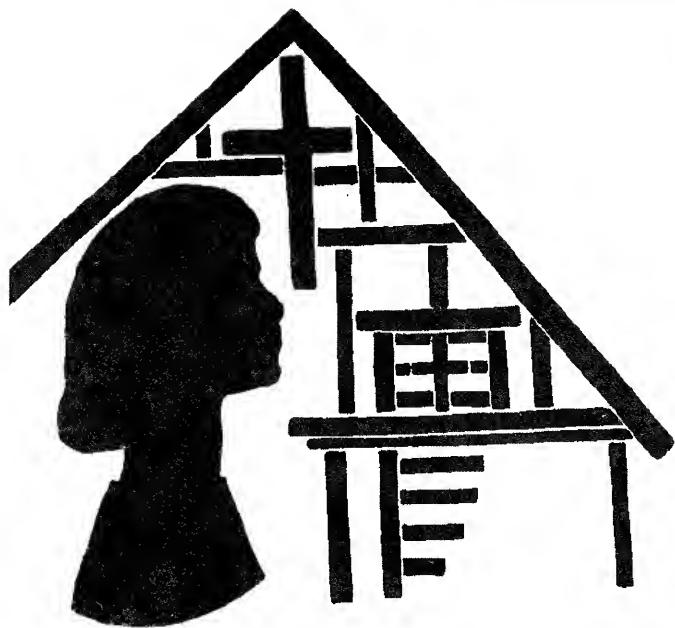


women or risk spiritual stagnation. Kerry Fast expresses deep feelings of exclusion, yet loves the church and longs to exercise her gifts more fully. Finally we hear a voice from outside the church, as Brenda Suderman reflects on her struggle with the church and her subsequent decision to leave.

Many more voices could have been included. I hope this issue of *Report* will challenge us, and by God's grace empower us to struggle boldly with our sense of calling and our deep longings to fully express our gifts in the church.
—Kathy Shantz

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Suggested Resources

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by Nadine Friesen

Life in Ministry "a Surprise"

In many ways the pilgrimage of my life and ministry are as much a surprise to me as they are to anyone else. As I reflect back upon 15 years of full-time ministry in a local church, I am continually amazed by the way God works out his plan.

A call to ministry started as a quiet assumption as soon as I begun to learn about and know God personally. If one commits his or her life to Christ and accepts his grace, then one also expresses gratitude by serving God and people through whatever opportunities God gives. It wasn't until I began working in a church that I knew that was the specific direction my journey would take.

In the years before college, there were several things that motivated my inclinations toward ministry. The first was my personal childlike commitment at the age of six to follow Christ's leading in my life. When I was eight, my father died and I began developing a keen awareness that I was not fatherless, but could learn to trust and depend upon my heavenly Father. He would be the director and source of strength for the pilgrimage. It was a way of life encouraged by my mother, for which I am very grateful. During my high school years, the church was the place I felt most affirmed and I thoroughly enjoyed being involved with the people and activities of my church family.

The college segment of the journey called for more specific decisions regarding the future. I've never been a person who could easily set long range goals so I simply followed the path that seemed best and most interesting at the time. That included a Bachelors degree in humanities with an emphasis in Bible. With encouragement from college professors and family, I decided to continue my education at seminary and earned a Master of Arts degree in biblical studies.

When I dreamed about the future, the screen was pretty blank. Thoughts of teaching crossed my mind, but didn't stick for long. Pastoring in the Mennonite Brethren Church, of which I was and am a member, didn't seem like an option and therefore didn't consume much dreaming time. My field-education experience enabled me to be a pastoral intern with a United Methodist congregation, which gave me invaluable experience and exposure to the dynamics of church life from

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a new perspective. The years at seminary, like the earlier part of my life, were for the most part a day-by-day pilgrimage, hoping and trusting that when the next step had to be taken there would be direction.

During the last several months of school, an invitation came from the Hillsboro (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church. It was not an easy decision for the church. The church knew it had a member attending seminary, preparing for something—but she was a woman. The congregation was supportive with finances and encouragement during my schooling and wanted to continue to affirm my desire to serve the church, but were not sure how to do so. After discussions and a vote, it was decided—by most—to invite me to come for one year to evaluate their Christian Education ministries, with decisions regarding the future to be made after that year. It was a full-time position, with a salary of \$4,000. Fortunately, my mom lived in Hillsboro and I was able to move in with her.

I said “yes” and began that one-year term which stretched into 15. It was an awesome and exciting task. The congregation was large. I had not prepared specifically for Christian Education and I knew some people felt quite uneasy about my presence. But I also was involved with the life of a congregation on a daily basis, a place where I felt at home. The senior and associate pastors were supportive and the Christian Ed staff responsive to suggestions and encouragement.

As I look back on those first years, I smile. No one knew what to call me. Even the title, “Director of Christian Education,” was uncommon among Mennonite Brethren. For several years my office was one end of a men’s Sunday School classroom. Many assumed a good part of my job was to assist the church secretary. There was some confusion at pastors’ retreats—should I be introduced as a pastor? When we divided into groups, should I meet with the pastors, their wives or “other.” I smile now; I didn’t always smile then. There were times of loneliness, wondering where I fit. The excitement and privilege of serving the church, however, outweighed the difficulties. The weight of my responsibilities was Christian Education but I also began to participate in worship services, visitation and planning other activities.

Over the years, there have been two times when I sensed the greatest uneasiness about having a woman on the pastoral staff. The first was three years after I arrived, when the senior pastor left after serving for more than 20 years. The associate had left a year earlier and there were some who were convinced that I hoped to move into the role of senior pastor—an

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idea with which they were definitely not comfortable. I had no intentions or interest in doing so, but the assumptions led to decisions such as allowing me to participate in morning worship only two Sundays a month for a time and attempting to diminish my visibility with the congregation. That was a painful time for me during which I questioned my gifts, abilities and effectiveness in serving Christ and the church. As usual God had other people walking along on the pilgrimage who continued to support and encourage.

The second time of strongest tension came several years ago when the committee responsible for pastoral leadership decided to change my title, which had been Director of Christian Education. My responsibilities had broadened considerably and they wanted to “officially” add some items to my job description. This again raised the question of whether or not the congregation really wanted a woman “pastor.” It was the first time open and honest discussions of feelings really surfaced. I think it was a cleansing experience. The topic was like a wound many were afraid to lance because of the pain that could result for me and among people who openly discussed their differences of opinion. It was difficult, but I also feel a commitment to a congregation is like any other commitment to a significant relationship—one doesn’t run when it gets difficult. Because of our commitment to Christ and a common cause, we talk, pray and try to work it out. After almost a year of processing, the church extended an open-ended call. My title changed to Coordinator of Discipleship Ministries. The title reflects the hesitancy to call a woman a pastor, but it also highlights the expansion of my ministry responsibilities that are a part of discipleship.

As far as I know, I was the first woman to be a full-time staff member of a Mennonite Brethren Church. Being first is exciting; it also has its challenges. Some of those challenges have included the confusion that exists regarding a biblical understanding of the source and meaning of authority within the body of Christ. As I understand scripture, it is only through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that anyone, man or woman, has the power to speak or act in the name of Christ. When we view that authority as coming from a position, title or person, we have assumed power God didn’t intend any of us to have in and of ourselves. Another challenge is the inconsistencies related to how and when people feel it is appropriate for women to lead. Often it seems to be more a matter of time and place of meeting, than a theological issue. Things said and done on Wednesday evening may not be seen as “right” if said or done at Sunday morning worship. Misinterpretation of motives has at times been quite

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frustrating. Some assume that finding joy in using leadership gifts is equal to enjoying power over people. For me, leadership within the body of Christ means putting the needs of others before my own, not coercing people to do as I say.

There are some key factors that have enabled me to find more joy than frustration in being a woman in church ministry. The support and freedom to process together with the pastors I work with is essential. For instance, while we personally would feel free to have me participate in preaching, we also share a commitment to being sensitive to the attitudes of our congregation. We would rather move cautiously in that particular area than force the issue and lose openness for other areas of significant service. Sometimes I think the struggles over title and position for women in ministry, which can be frustrating, are also excellent opportunities to grow in developing a Christ-like perspective on ministry. Jesus spent his entire ministry enduring misinterpretation, lack of respect and finding ways to meet the needs of people while the religious leaders and establishment frowned at him. Do I have any right to think it should be any easier for me?

Another key factor in finding security in my role is that because I had never "planned" to be in full-time church ministry and the idea seemed so unlikely, I've always felt I must be here because that's what God wanted. I'm not suggesting everyone should go through life not knowing what they want and then wait to see what God figures out. But I couldn't have forced a Mennonite Brethren Church to call or keep me for 15 years if I had tried or wanted to. It's God's idea that my pilgrimage should take this route and I'm extremely grateful God has given me the opportunity.

Nadine Friesen is coordinator of Discipleship Ministries at Hillsboro (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church.

by Lorraine Roth

Serving in the Mission Field

I have been asked to reflect on my experiences as a woman preceding, during and immediately following my missionary service from 1954 to 1962 in Honduras, Central America, under the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities.

I grew up in an Amish Mennonite congregation in southern Ontario. When I was born in 1930, few women were teaching classes in Sunday school, but there was an active women's sewing circle. During the 1930's, few Amish Mennonites in Ontario went to high school, and interest in missions was limited to the support of a missionary couple from the Amish constituency serving in Argentina.

Occasional special revival-type meetings had been held during the 1920s and 30s, but in the 1940s the revival movement blossomed in this congregation and throughout most of the Amish-Mennonite constituency. Through it, the cause of missions was promoted and persons were encouraged to enter missionary service. This, of course, would require educational preparation.

I had been out of school two years when Rockway Mennonite School in Kitchener opened in 1945. I was one of the first students, and very grateful to be there! Thriving on the educational and social stimulation, I entered the new doors of opportunity without chaffing at those which were closed because I was a woman. I was interested in teaching; so I did not feel restricted because teaching and nursing were almost the only professions open to women. In a sense, it was easier when the choices were fewer.

After teaching in a rural school for two years, I entered Goshen (Ind.) College, with a rather vague interest in missionary service. I think I took Spanish because I liked languages rather than a particular interest in serving in a Spanish-speaking country. It was through a fellow Spanish class student that I was contacted by Orie Miller, executive secretary for Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions (EMBM), the mission program of Lancaster (Pa.) Conference, concerning an assignment in Honduras.

I was not overly enthusiastic about going to Honduras—probably because it was completely unknown to me. I had to



check a map to find where it was. I had been to Europe on a Menno Travel tour prior to entering college, and would have had more interest in an MCC assignment in Europe. Knowing Orie Miller was also connected with MCC, I indicated that interest. His reply was that couples were needed in Europe at that time. Since I wasn't a "couple," and since there was a need for a teacher in Honduras—an assignment suitable for a single woman—I proceeded to follow that lead.

Interestingly enough, my singleness was also the objection my parents raised to my pursuing missionary service. I suppose their concern was for me personally—the loneliness or danger a single woman might experience in a foreign culture.

One of the problems which an assignment under the Eastern Board posed for me was its strict dress code. My home congregation in Ontario was conservative enough, and I did not really care to submit to something even stricter. Orie Miller understood that concern, because he also accommodated to rules which he personally would not have chosen. He told me what dress codes I would be expected to follow when

in Lancaster County, and said if anyone came to me and asked whether I did not notice that many of the women wore strings on their coverings, and didn't I think I should too, I might reply that I was thinking about it. That down-to-earth advice put me at ease, and I agreed to continue to dialogue with the mission board.

Although many Lancaster Conference young people were attending Goshen College, the conference leadership was somewhat critical of the college because these students sometimes rebelled against the strict authority exercised by the conference leaders. I tried to fill out the doctrinal questionnaire both honestly as well as in keeping with their standards. All missionary candidates, and perhaps especially the single women, were in awe of the meeting with the Bishop Board, which interviewed all prospective missionaries. I was aggressive enough and perhaps also naive enough, not to be particularly frightened. The encounter turned out to be rather exhilarating. Coming from Goshen College, they were not surprised that I wasn't convinced about all their rules. But I also learned they did not insist that I agree with all their rules, as long as I was willing to obey the rules. That

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actually was a relief! They were somewhat taken aback at my challenge of the idea of conference authority, but accepted that—without being convinced, of course.

I am sure the Bishop Board's assessment of their encounter that day was that they were dealing with a somewhat impudent young woman. My own view was that I was defending myself before a group of rather heavy-handed men who felt called to defend the church as they understood it. I did not realize, and I doubt whether they did, that here was a clash of two ideologies—centralized authority versus congregationalism. To their credit, they accepted me as a teacher for their mission in Honduras, with the comment that I would not be responsible for the church discipline. Had I been a man, destined to be a leader in the church, I might have been turned down!

After a year of language study in Costa Rica, I was given another year to observe and study existing mission schools and then make plans for opening a primary school in the town of Tocoa, situated in the Aguan Valley on the north coast. A nurse was also sent to Tocoa, to operate a clinic. We single women shared an apartment adjoining the chapel.

My assignment began only a few years after the opening of the mission. During my years there, everything was run by mission personnel. Shortly after I left, Hondurans were given a place on the council. In Honduras, all mission personnel were involved in decision-making. There was no ordained-men-only decision-making group, as was the case in some other fields.

During a short furlough, I attended seminary classes at Goshen. At that time few women enrolled in the seminary, although women frequently took certain classes. H.S. Bender announced a meeting for students to discuss church discipline at his house one evening. Knowing this was a live issue in Honduras and that I could express an opinion although I would not be called upon to do the disciplining, I asked a few of my student friends if it was appropriate for me to attend the meeting. They encouraged me to go, and I accompanied them. Bender was quite surprised when I showed up, and let me know it really was not expected.

In Honduras, missionary men—all ordained—always did the preaching. When furloughs came due, there was not always an ordained man to fill the vacancy, and gifted Hondurans and missionary women, especially the teachers, would lead and deliver a "message" at the worship services. One missionary from another station questioned our list of

participants, which included women for the "message." I told him the men "preach"; we women "speak." On another occasion, this same person wanted me to speak to one of the women who was wearing clothing which he did not approve of. I refused his request, because I understood discipline was not my business.

The question of women in leadership was never discussed. Other missions in the country varied in their practice. Some were run almost entirely by women, while others were very strict about women speaking in the presence of men. Eastern Board seemingly allowed its personnel on the various fields to work out that issue as they chose. Although no rules were made concerning women in leadership, we had obviously come from churches where male leadership was the norm. None of us thought to challenge this, but in the absence of that leadership, we quietly did what we thought appropriate.

After my return from Honduras the church began to open up to the participation of the laity, which soon included women. Although the Amish tradition had not been strong on authority for the ordained, that distinction was creeping in, and the "sacred desk" (pulpit) was for ordained men only. When loud-speaker systems were installed, there was a second microphone to the side of the pulpit and perhaps on a lower level, which the Sunday school superintendent was expected to use. When I was asked to speak, either before or after a term in Honduras, my parents were always concerned that I not speak from the pulpit unless I was invited to do so. That was not a male/female issue, but rather one of ordained versus laity.

Sometime during the 1960's I was asked to speak concerning the scriptural basis for women in leadership, and I declined. I am not sure why. Perhaps I suspected it might lead to a battle between the sexes, in which I was not interested. Occasionally the leadership I exercise has been questioned, but I refuse to do battle. I feel it is the problem of the person who challenges me, not mine.

Lorraine Roth of Waterloo, Ont., was a missionary in Honduras from 1954-1962, under the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions. She is a freelance historical and genealogical writer and is currently completing a book on Mennonite women of Ontario.

**Regardless of the reason,
recovery means letting go of
blame.**

by Pat Swartzendruber

"Recovered Living"

At a recent meeting of Mennonite pastors, one leader stated, "The most difficult people to pastor in my congregation are recovering Mennonites. They feel they are victims of their early Mennonite experiences and continue to blame present troubles on the past."

I'm grateful the pastors I know are prepared to walk with persons who, for many reasons, are victims on the path to recovery. Regardless of the reason, recovery means letting go of blame. A sense of isolation is often the first phase of being a victim and culminates in becoming a target of the group or individual to whom one is unacceptable.

Friends have helped me understand how one begins to experience life as a victim. Acknowledging painful experiences, whether past or present, recovery and empowerment become well-worn paths for ourselves and with others. Being human positions nearly everyone to be a victim at some phase in the life-cycle. Consequently, the struggle for self-worth and dignity is common to all.

Being female, a Christian who is Mennonite, a healthcare provider and for the past seven years a church agency administrator, has given me opportunity to become a victim and remain a victim if I so chose.

Simply being female is enough in most societies to be well-placed for victimization. Equal opportunity, while not fully attained, is legally possible within democratic societies. This fact alone encouraged me to choose recovery and have courage to consider options. Seeing firsthand the restricted lives of women in many countries makes me appreciate this country's constitutions and the 19th amendment. It adds responsibility to promote legal reform for women in other parts of the world.

Being a Christian in the United States and Canada does not jeopardize one's basic rights as it does in many societies of the world. Since I've chosen a pacifist religious faith in the United States, as a religious minority I experience victimization. Subtle harassment of Mennonite pacifists during the 1991 war against Iraq came as no surprise to me. Courage comes from hearing stories of parents and grandparents who stood firm in their convictions to resist participating in national aggression.

Knowing of injustice, discrimination, and basic rights refused to persons because of religious affiliation in many countries, I am grateful for this country's bill of right's establishment clause. Discrimination or prejudice I and other Mennonites have felt in this society cannot be minimized, although I can choose recovery partly due to a legal system that endorses religious freedom of both the minorities and the majority. As the majority society becomes less distinct in our increasingly multireligious country, this amendment becomes more tested and strained.

I have chosen to risk being Christian regardless of what jeopardy it brings. I've chosen, as have many of you, the risk of being a victim of discrimination because of a belief in the Spirit of God available to me through Jesus Christ. Strength comes from those who have been victimized due to their faith and despite this claim power to overcome bitterness and find recovery through the Spirit of God.

Voluntary decision-making may lead to victimization, as is the case with ideological and religious choices. A person cannot choose characteristics such as gender, race, or age. I only choose what degree of equal worth I will attach to myself and to others regardless of these characteristics.





From a rational perspective, I would not choose to be female in a Muslim, Sharia-law dominated society. Only in a few countries of the world would I voluntarily choose to be female. Global evaluation of the female experience continues to make me feel vulnerable and erodes personal confidence, despite living in North America.

As a married female, I have a husband who has been eager to share in a marriage relationship of mutual opportunity. I have had few moments of feeling devalued because of gender. Many of us have friends who discovered their husbands to be controlling and abusive. We experience secondary pain as we attempt to support the victims on their path out of the situation. The reality that "when one part of the body suffers the whole body suffers" saps our own

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personal strength. Recovery comes slowly when the wounds are constantly reopened in iterating victimization.

The seemingly endless experiences of females harassed and abused by undisciplined males on school grounds, in workplaces and social settings results in either hopeless consent or persistent boundary-setting. Many have enough self-worth and security to choose boundary-setting. Many consent under threat and fear.

In church agency administration I've experienced an environment of men and women who have chosen disciplined lifestyle. Their Christian faith, values and democratic principles foster personal integrity, respectfulness, and equality of all persons in the human family. I have deep respect for the integrity of the men and women who are serving the church. A few have allowed themselves to hurt others with harassing or abusive behaviors. Harassment incidences that I'm aware of fall far short of the average number of incidences in this country's workplaces (some experts say between 40 and 50 percent of all working females have experienced harassment).

Workers are vulnerable to becoming victims. Structures facilitate accomplishing tasks or producing a product. I am most familiar with organizational structures which define task and decision-making involvement based on level of responsibility and specialization. This form of organizational structure lacks commonly espoused democratic principles. In other words, persons who have not invested in specialized training or are not prepared for a broad scope of responsibilities are not given equal opportunity for input into important decisions impacting the future of the organization.

Persons in organizations usually make decisions for the organization relative to the scope of responsibility they have been given rather than by a representative model and one vote per person. Those who were economically unable to develop specialties, or due to gender or race were not given opportunity to prepare for certain tasks or specialties often feel victimized in these structures.

Employers have aided the recovery for persons in these situations by providing on-the-job training, continuing

Placing my ultimate trust in Jesus Christ supplies confidence—enough to trust the spark of the Creator's goodness found in every person. Forgiveness will follow.

...being a full-time Mary didn't give me time to be the Martha I sometimes wanted to be.

by Linda Matties

The Mary-Martha Complex in the Post-Modern Church

During my second semester at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, I taught a pre-school Sunday school class. One Saturday while reviewing the next day's lesson, I began by reading the biblical text. It was the account of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in which Mary "attends class" while Martha "does the housewife hospitality thing." I've forgotten what the lesson writers wanted me to teach those preschoolers. What I do remember is what that text taught me about my feelings about being in seminary.

Just prior to coming to seminary my housemate and I hosted a college and career group in our home. It was the perfect house for such meetings because the garage had been converted into a family room. The meetings were held on Saturday evenings. This provided the incentive to spend Saturday morning cleaning the house and preparing refreshments. I enjoyed the hosting and the preparations. However, when I began seminary studies in another country I found the social and spiritual nature of these meetings missing in my life. I also found I didn't have the time and couldn't convince full-time student roommates to share the responsibility for frequent hosting of guests. Preparing the Sunday school lesson helped me see that being a full-time Mary didn't give me time to be the Martha I sometimes wanted to be.

On that Saturday morning I named my feelings "the Mary/Martha Complex." Giving them a name didn't solve the problem but it did help to define it. Now I am able to use the idea of the Mary/Martha complex as a framework for describing what has happened to women in the larger church scene over the decades of my lifetime. For convenience sake, I have used the 10-year span of a decade to describe a number of general characteristics and developments. However, I recognize that the actual time span during which these events occurred differs for individual women and is fairly fluid across the actual dates.

education and affirmative action hiring practices. In my experience greater attention has been given to these efforts in church organizations than in secular organizations.

Some suggest that scope of responsibility and specialization need not be the determinant of one's level of involvement in organizational decision-making. Historically, factors such as gender, tribe, family, race, wealth, and religion determined involvement in decision-making for the society. Primal forms of decision-making often led to totalitarianism or anarchism. Benevolent totalitarianism produced positive results, yet not sufficient to squelch the desire for democratic processes.

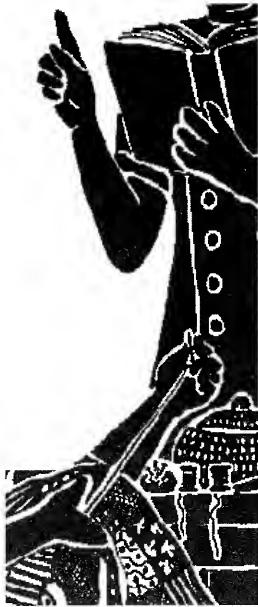
Likewise, organizations are discovering the importance of involving everyone in major organizational decisions. Workers, particularly in democratic countries need not assume a long-term victim posture with the negotiating skills and legal avenues available to them. Again, threats and fear impede many.

The trust and confidence to choose recovery often evades victims. Regardless of origins, the path to recovery is made more difficult when victimization continues, if not in my life, in someone else. I can't let go of the anger, depression and destroyed trust too soon.

Truth, justice and goodness is found most perfectly in Jesus Christ. Placing my ultimate trust in Jesus Christ supplies confidence—enough to trust the spark of the Creator's goodness found in every person. Forgiveness will follow.

Recovered living for me means being at ease with the tension between unattainable and attainable justice. Disappointment in imperfect humanity is a waste of positive energy. I like taking the small steps toward more just relationships. Those usually begin where someone feels left out. Thankfully, pastors are often the first to notice.

Pat Swartzendruber is vice president for Administration and Resources at Mennonite Board of Missions in Elkhart, Ind. She is parent of four children and is currently completing a Masters of Science in administration at Notre Dame University. She attends Southside Fellowship in Elkhart.



1. Pre-1970 —Naehverin und Speisekommittee (Sewing Circle and Food Committee)

Until the time I graduated from high school in 1970, most women were expected to be good Marthas. All good Marthas belonged to sewing circles, sewed for MCC, canned for city missions and Bible school kitchens, and cooked and catered at family weddings and funerals.

Their ventures into Mary's world included reading the Bible and other Christian books to one another at Sewing Circle meetings. They attended Bible school to learn how to tell Bible stories to children and to meet "Mr. Right." They occasionally heard from those daring Marys who had man-like ministries in overseas missions.

Those few who chose not to be good Marthas were thought to have never really made it into the real world of adult women. It didn't matter that many of these unMartha-like women had become teachers and professors, doctors and nurses, social workers and psychologists, etc. Their primary value to the church was to teach the segregated girl's classes in Sunday school and clubs.

Finding willing and even qualified nominees became a lot easier if committees were willing to include women.

With their experience of putting together children's Christmas concerts and worship liturgies they brought creativity and imagination to oral presentations and sermons.

2. The 1970's—Nominations and Elections

The decade is a watershed between the striving to be good Marthas and the surprising discovery that Marys could do a whole lot more than just sit and listen at Jesus' feet. Two major factors contributed to this change. First, the use of birth control and the limiting of family size freed many women from childrearing much sooner. Secondly, those women who had become professionals were now making significantly larger salaries and some were even beginning to retire on fairly good pensions. They bought and sometimes even built beautiful homes that rivaled those of any diligent Martha.

These factors had an impact on the nominations committees in churches, especially if there had been preaching about spiritual gifts prior to annual meetings. Finding willing and even qualified nominees became a lot easier if committees were willing to include women. A single female who had been an educator for several decades was an obvious choice when a director of Christian Education or Sunday School superintendent was needed. A married woman, supported financially by her husband, had the free time to undertake organization tasks.

However, Christian education directors and superintendents had always been on the church board. This meant the churches had two options. They could restructure the church leadership to exclude women or they could welcome and include them. Since the nominations committees often took church leaders by surprise there wasn't a lot of time for study, so the decision was left to the congregation. With fewer babies at home, more women attended business meetings and many men prided themselves on pragmatic decision making. So, to the surprise of diehards and legalists, women got elected to some significant positions. Then, to everyone's continuing surprise, they did the jobs they were elected to as well as or better than their male predecessors. They conducted choirs and experimented with new and creative liturgies. They streamlined labor-intensive Christian Education programs. They dared to speak to the congregation from behind the pulpit. They moved from their seats at the feet of Jesus to the chair held by the disciples who had been given the task of passing on those teachings.

3. The 1980's—Scholarship and Exegesis

This is a decade of metamorphosis. We are now confronted with a generation of women who never joined the sewing circle and who discovered their Maryian wings through



functioning as elected leaders in many church programs. As decision makers they began to ask serious theological questions that their pastors were sometimes unable or unwilling to answer. This sent them back to the place where Mary had started out—the feet of Jesus.

Serving in the role of ministering Marys instead of ministering Marthas demanded a new type of training which they believed was to be found at the seminaries. For the first time in history seminaries had women students who were on something other than an overseas missionary track. These were serious women intent on local church and denominational ministry.

Their ability and success became a threat to the pastoral establishment in several ways. Since they had come looking for answers they worked hard at Greek and Hebrew and even exegesis amid the groans of young males seeking senior pastoral positions via the baffling ladder of declensions and conjugations. Those students who had come to seminary straight from Bible college were left in the dust by their older sisters who had run vacation Bible schools, Pioneer Girls, and Sunday schools. With their experience of putting together children's Christmas concerts and worship liturgies they brought creativity and imagination to oral presentations and sermons.

However, it wasn't only fellow students who were challenged by these disciples from the class of Mary. Among wider church leadership were those who suddenly saw the need to devise an exegesis that would curb the opportunities of these women while protecting their own interests. All-male "spiritual" elderships were dreamed up as the "biblical" antidote to electing women to decision-making positions. Male headship held sway in the selecting of pastors. As a result, many of these Marys who had trained as pastors, counsellors and Bible teachers, suddenly found the doors of churches and denominational schools locked to them unless they were willing to return to their previous unpaid volunteer status. Only a few succeeded in breaking into these male-dominated ranks.

4. The 1990's—Stagnation or Re-creation

As a result of the re-entrenchment of male dominance in church and denominational leadership which occurred in the late 1980's we are again at a crossroads. We can let the church stagnate at its current level or we can recreate a new entity based on genuine equality of opportunity.

If stagnation of the status quo is what we want we will keep reinforcing the double standard for leadership. This double standard will result in 20-year old male Bible school students with next to no ministry experience getting preference in internship programs over older, experienced female seminary

Out of these circles can emerge the kind of Christianity that has room for Marys and Marthas according to their gifts and calling. This generation of church women can develop the new theology that will take Christianity into the next millennium.

graduates. It will mean salaried male pastors who get expense allowances and paid sabbaticals while women volunteer and pay their own way. Commitment for women will be defined by faithfulness in nursery and kitchen duty. Aspirations of men for salaried ministry will be applauded as the call of God, while in women it will be labelled as pride and materialism. These are only some of the aspects of the double standard.

If this double standard is allowed to prevail women will have two choices. On the one hand, they can turn to the secular world and seek affirmation for their gifts through professional opportunities. In Canada, if not in other countries, professional women enjoy a great deal of equality and protection. On the other hand, women can form new kinds of "circles." These circles might not be recognized by traditional Marthas. Nor will they be the type of circles that pastors who support and encourage the small fellowship group movement will recognize. They will be the new creation of Mary-like persons who enjoy deep theological and biblical study, who long for sermons that interpret scripture for the life that we actually live in this decade rather than the one which many in our present churches think we should be living.

Out of these circles can emerge the kind of Christianity that has room for Marys and Marthas according to their gifts and calling. This generation of church women can develop the new theology that will take Christianity into the next millennium.

Linda Matties is a school librarian from Abbotsford, B.C., and enjoys writing.

by Kerry Fast

Struggling with Exclusion

Over the last few years, particularly over the last few months, I have been reading feminist writings on a variety of topics: from Irish mythology to Teresa of Avila to the more immediately pertinent topic of women in the modern Christian church. It is on this last issue that I have experienced the greatest amount of tension, both within myself and in interacting with others. This is not to say that Irish mythology or discalced sisters have not profoundly altered me, but these alterations have taken place in the solitude of my apartment. But when I step out into the world I meet others who do not walk the same path, most often in church life and faith. And this is an area dear to my heart and one to which I would like to remain committed.

In some senses I feel at a crossroads. Only in the last little while have I begun to persistently ask the question whether I can, with integrity, continue to participate in a community of faith that chooses to express its worship and service in terms and ways I feel quite uncomfortable with. I ask this because of the lack of participation of women in the church, but much more fundamentally, in terms of how women are devalued because they are ignored and their contribution not recognized or desired.

There comes a time when one has asked the question long enough to work through some kind of answer. Writing this is my attempt to work through the various experiences I have had, things I have read, and people I have met. This is not to say the debate that rages inside me is resolved, but rather that I have a clearer idea of where I am at. In mulling over my experiences, I have had to think about my past and bring it to bear on the future in what I hope to be a productive way.

I have been troubled about the lack of women's participation in the church for a long time, so when I was asked a few years ago to be a delegate to a conference council meeting and represent my church, I really could not say no. A few years earlier the conference had decided that women could be church delegates, which at that time I considered a major step forward—the key in the dead bolt had made a quarter revolution.

I was really quite serious to see what this all-day meeting

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would be like. I was expecting a lot of men, but I wasn't expecting to be the *only* woman there. When I failed to spot a single other woman, I knew that I would have to see this one through on my own. "Well," I thought, "I guess I'll find out what this brotherhood business is all about." This was my first ever all-men setting. I don't think most of the men realized their words and actions were being carefully observed by one cynical woman, even if she was insignificant. "Maybe the church really would be better off if women kept their incapable noses out of this business," I whispered to a friend, "I'd hate to destroy this experience of male bonding." All I received was a snort.

I found the morning session interesting, but eagerly awaited lunch break as my breakfast tea began to make its way through my system. I presume the normal prayer was said (they may even have sung the doxology), and the usual announcements made about lunch, but all I heard were the chairman's words that men should feel free to use all the washrooms in the building, because otherwise the lines would get awfully long. The words stunned me; I felt as if I had been whipped across the face. Not that I couldn't refrain from using the washroom for at least another few hours if necessary. "The women's washroom belongs to women," I screamed silently. "All these men can't invade what is rightfully mine, and deny my entry." I felt as if the small bit of significance and distinctness I still had in this sea of men had been torn from me. Now I was nothing. Even my biological difference didn't deserve respect. When the chairman was confronted with his insensitivity, he only shrugged and stated indifferently that I could fend for myself. He saw no need to accommodate this woman who was silly enough to come to such a meeting.

Lunch was not enjoyable. Besides worrying about when the washroom would be free of men, I felt I had been betrayed so that some man could continue in his chauvinistic, insensitive life without being brought face to face with the women, and the many others, who he has pushed from his path. I felt I was carrying the whole burden of guilt women have always carried because they were women, because they were women who tried to make this world a place for humanity, not just for men.

The meeting continued after lunch, but I had lost interest. The afternoon finally ended. To close the meeting, and as an expression of what the nature and purpose of the meeting had been, a man suggested we sing #485. I opened the hymnbook, glad the meeting was over, glad I could soon remove myself to a friendlier environment, and glad I could sing; perhaps a



good hymn would salvage a small fragment of this disastrous day. And so they sang; but I cried:

What blessedness when brethren unite with one accord,
(How many times have women stood on the out
skirts, silenced?)

Their hearts and voices blending with joy before the
Lord.

Thy blessing, Lord, descendeth, as precious morning
dew,
(How many times have women stood with hands

All the years I have been told by word and deed that the skills and perspectives women bring to the body of Christ are unimportant, that they are not necessary for the church to adequately express the Christian faith.

outstretched, but been brushed away?)
And falls on faithful brethren with fragrance daily new.
And all who are redeemed will stand before the throne,
(How many times have women fallen to their knees
alone and afraid?)
Christ's body thus united, forever will be
one Christ's body *thus* united...?

I see this experience as a prototype of my experience as a woman in the church; as if all the ideas, mind sets and experiences I have encountered are symbolized by this event. All the years I have been told by word and deed that the skills and perspectives women bring to the body of Christ are unimportant, that they are not necessary for the church to adequately express the Christian faith. This continues to hurt deeply as I continue to hear it. Women have become involved in areas that have until recently been out of their reach, but there is still not always a recognition of their contribution.

It continues to hurt because the church is not often interested in women and their skills. I realized this recently when I read a missionary report in the conference paper. The problem the missionary shared was that women were being converted but their husbands remained uninterested. The writer requested prayer for their conversion so the church would have leadership.

The church does not know what to do with women who don't feel comfortable teaching children, serving on the library committee or organizing the refreshments. The church does not know what to do with women who would feel most comfortable preaching a sermon, debating the constitution or chairing a business or board meeting. I have seen many articulate, educated women who in their careers contribute in worthwhile and significant ways. But in the church these women are not given opportunity to contribute. Some of the skills I think might be lying dormant in me are skills considered inappropriate for use in the church, because I am a woman.

A few months ago, I attended a meeting called by the church leadership. One of the topics initiated by the ministers was the difficulty of filling positions in the church because everyone was always declining. Being one of the three women in attendance, I stated that I would be quite willing to fill any number of positions, but I wasn't allowed too, and that I found this quite painful. Silence! This was not a perspective that had been considered, nor was it going to be considered.

It continues to hurt because I have noticed other women are as hesitant as I am to speak their minds. Our fear of being a solitary voice has separated us, and we have walked alone.

It continues to hurt because the church does not allow me to do what it has taught me to do. That is, the church was always supposed to be the central focus and expression of faith and community. I have had to go outside church, and without the sanction of the church, to follow what I understand to be the calling of God. This has left me disoriented and disillusioned.

It continues to hurt because I am still confined by the silence expected of me. Not by being told to stop talking, but by never being given the opportunity to talk; by never being taught how to talk. I have had no role models of female participation in the public life of the church. It was always brotherhood meetings; it was always men who provided the final word on faith; it was always chairmen; it was always men who defined what was acceptable behavior for women.

I have had a very difficult time realizing it is okay to participate in the public realm, which has for me always been a male-dominated world. It is not difficult for me to excel in areas traditionally inhabited by women; my training has been thorough. It is not difficult for me to plan and execute a wedding reception or to comfort children. But it is difficult for me to realize that my thoughts and comments on a topic are valid and might be beneficial to others.

It continues to hurt because I have noticed other women are as hesitant as I am to speak their minds. Our fear of being a solitary voice has separated us, and we have walked alone. It continues to hurt because there is no forum in which I can express my pain and begin to heal and change.

I am often told I am too impatient and intolerant. "Things have changed so drastically in the last few years, Kerry, you should be grateful. A small rudder has to work very hard and very long to change the course of a ship. After all, Kerry, don't you teach an adult Sunday school class when the official line is that women should not teach men in the church?" I know all this, but still it hurts.

I have not said these things as an opportunity to vent my frustration about my church, or because I hate all men or because I am the victim of continued discrimination and misogyny. Rather, it is because the church does have a lot to learn, because sometimes I do get very angry when too many gifted and needed women are pushed slowly to the fringes until they leave, because I sense that I too am not wanted, because I want to somehow reach across to those women who feel as helpless as I do, and because I want those men who are afraid that women will somehow destroy what they so

I yearn to see women, past and present, bring their lives to bear on the theology of the church. I want women who have carried daughters and sons in their wombs to tell us what incarnation is. I want women who have never spoken aloud in church to tell us what it means to listen.

strongly believe in to understand that I love the church as much as they do.

I used to think that if women would be considered equal contenders for church leadership positions I would be satisfied. After all, what part of the church hierarchy is more carefully guarded by the men who fill those positions? I am no longer as convinced about that. (Not that I wouldn't love to see a woman pastor.)

I said near the beginning that I was trying to bring the past and future to bear on my present experiences and vice versa. I think often about the generations of women who have gone before me. I know little about them; their names are not important in church history. But they are important to me because they are the only examples I have of how to be a woman in the church. This does not mean I intend to remain silent as they did, but rather that I will listen to them—I want them to tell me who God is, and how I am to follow God. I am realizing more and more that who they are and what they have done must be recognized. Their sphere of influence must become as authoritative in the life of the church as any sermon preached.

I yearn to see women, past and present, bring their lives to bear on the theology of the church. I want women who have carried daughters and sons in their wombs to tell us what incarnation is. I want women who have never spoken aloud in church to tell us what it means to listen. I want women without husbands to tell us what it means to have God as their advocate. I want widows with no security to tell us what it means to be poor in spirit. I want women who have borne many children to tell us what a quiver full of arrows is all about. I want women who have baked bread all their lives, sustaining their families, to show us how to celebrate the Eucharist.

I want to give words to their silence so that others can hear them as I have. But mostly, I want to listen.

Kerry Fast is an administrative assistant in the MCC Canada Overseas Department. She holds a Bachelor of Religious Studies from Mennonite Brethren Bible College and a B.A. from the University of Winnipeg.

by Brenda Suderman

A Voice from Outside the Church

I left the church for the first time at age three. Shy and not fluent in the language of Sunday school—German—I refused to attend and didn't return until English became the teaching language two years later.

The second time I left the church the issues were not quite as clear. Back home again after earning a degree in journalism, I was 26, single, looking for a job, and not interested in returning to active churchgoing.

Yet the church was my life during my growing up years on a farm in southern Manitoba. I attended Sunday school, girls choir after school and Pioneer Girls every Wednesday night for six years. In high school, youth group activities and retreats dominated my weekends. After graduation, I spent a year as a Pioneer Girls guide. I was baptized at age 16, taking seriously the call to peacemaking, stewardship and community implicit in Mennonite church membership.

Then I attended Canadian Mennonite Bible College for three years graduating with a theology degree and making a mark as a better-than-average student. I went on to take religion courses at two Winnipeg universities, becoming in the words of one professor “one of the best students he'd ever had.”



My personal convictions and writing skills led to a job as the staff writer and editor for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada where I spent three years reporting on church conference meetings. Meanwhile, I was involved on a refugee committee and as children's club leader at a Winnipeg church.

My writing also stayed within the boundaries of the church. After spending several summers working at children's camps, I wrote two camp curriculums for those camps, and spent another summer as a camp director. I also wrote features and news stories for church periodicals, and once wrote a month's worth of meditations for a devotional booklet.

To put it simply, I was involved in my church, and was known in churches across the country because of my job. It wasn't unusual for a middle-aged or elderly person to come up to me at a conference or meeting and tell me how wonderful it was that someone as young as I was involved in conference work.

Although I appeared to be committed on the outside, inside I was fighting a battle to stay. After college, I became disillusioned with the church, my congregation and any other church, and found it very difficult to go to work without expressing my doubts. It was understood, although not said, that I had to attend a church if I wanted to keep my job.

Very often my friends, many who had similar backgrounds, would ask how I could work for the church. They, who had Bible college degrees and voluntary service assignments under their belts, left the church shortly after, while I stayed to become an employee.

I couldn't answer their questions, because to speak openly about my struggle meant only one thing—to leave. So instead, I made changes in my life. I got accepted into journalism school in another province, packed my bags and left Winnipeg and the church behind me. I attended a Mennonite church fairly regularly while studying in Ottawa, but felt more and more distant from it. When I returned to Manitoba nine months later, I didn't go back to church.

Now, nearly four years later, I still haven't returned. Except for a six-month stint attending an Anglican church while working in the Northwest Territories, I only attend worship services at Easter and Christmas and the occasional Sunday morning.

My decision to stop active church-going and involvement hasn't gone unnoticed by friends and acquaintances. Some,

especially friends from my former congregation, took my disinterest in the church personally at first. Others ask pointedly where I attend, or make a special effort to invite me to their church.

While I can live with my own decision to not attend, the issue is clouded by the fact that I am newly married. My husband was a regular church-goer before our marriage. Since our wedding we have attended one Sunday morning service together and he has attended alone on other occasions.

It's been difficult to articulate to him and the others who ask why I don't or won't go to church. To many, and perhaps also to some of you reading this, my reasons are mere excuses. And then there's the danger that people acquainted with me or my husband will misunderstand, and think these remarks are pointed at them. They're not.

One reason I'm no longer involved in the organized church is because I'm a journalist, skeptical by nature, and trained to look for the other side, the holes in the explanation, the discrepancies in the story. Very few of my journalism colleagues or acquaintances attend church or admit to any religious affiliation. Many call themselves agnostics or atheists.

I've found my Mennonite education and work record have been a hindrance in looking for work in the daily news media. Most editors have dismissed my three years of experiences with the church as no experience, and several have deliberately steered me away from religious stories.

But I'm not willing to blame individual editors and the journalism community at large for a shift in my personal beliefs and habits. Working many, many weekends, including Sunday mornings, didn't encourage regular church attendance.

My journalism career gave me the opportunity to leave a sheltered Mennonite existence far behind, and question the very tenets of Christianity. What about Muslims and Jews and Hindus and the many other expressions of faith? Was Christianity the only way? When I started asking those questions, it was difficult to go back to believing a person only had to invite "the Lord" into their heart to be saved. Fundamentalism as exercised in the southern Manitoba Mennonite church also pushed me partly out the door. A cynic from an early age, I scorned the view of evangelists and others who said Jesus was the answer. I was never comfortable with an emotional, simple faith, and always searched for a more intellectual, rational approach.

And then there's the fact I am a woman. When I was baptized in the Winkler Bergthal Mennonite Church in 1978, only men were allowed to vote at church meetings. Here I was, a new member, eager to be involved in the life of the church, but without power or a voice. Although women were franchised in that congregation a few years later, it was too late for me, since I had left my home town to study in Winnipeg, never to return to active involvement in that congregation.

While at CMBC I was characterized as a "radical feminist" for asking for inclusive language in the classroom and female theologians instead of the all-male staff that was firmly entrenched at that time. One of those men asked me if he should only read books written by women after I asked why all the books on his theology reading list were written by men.

In subsequent years, when I led a letter-writing campaign to encourage the college board to hire a female theology professor, the faculty dismissed the notion because only alumni, not students, were interested in the issue. The female students, the faculty said, didn't mind having an all-male faculty.

I always said I would leave the church because I am a feminist. Yet that world view wasn't the motivating factor in the end. For me, going to church alone on Sunday mornings was one of the loneliest things I've ever done. It seems to me the Mennonite church is oriented toward families, with Sunday school, picnics, potlucks, family night and other activities.

And then there is the question of age. Too old for college and career groups, but not really welcomed in the parents-with-young children category, I often felt I didn't have a place in church programs. I suppose one solution would have been to change churches, something I resisted at the time because I felt strongly I would get more from my church experience by staying committed, instead of church-shopping.

Now I am one of those people I used to scorn, a church attender only for special occasions, someone who believes she can find meaning and fulfillment outside of organized religion. Yes, I admit I miss some parts of regular church-going, such as the singing and music. But I don't miss the institution, and while I'm not totally cut off from the church and church people, I probably won't return very soon.

Brenda Suderman is a freelance journalist in Winnipeg, Man.

Book Review:

Questions for Peacemakers

Questions that Refuse to Go Away by Marian Claassen Franz (Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa., 1991, 103 pages)

"We didn't want to deal with the issue, but the issue was dealing with us." This is one person's response, recorded in *Questions that Refuse to Go Away*, to the issue of nuclear weapons. But it could be the reply to many difficult problems faced by people of faith today. *Questions that Refuse to Go Away* explores complex questions in a simple and practical way. Each of the 11 chapters begins with a question: Which king will you serve? When does divine obedience require civil disobedience? What belongs to Caesar? Etc.



Questions is a new book in the Herald Press Peace and Justice Series, a series of short books by Anabaptist writers on themes of war and peacemaking. In *Questions*, Marian pictures scripture as the foundation for the believing community's discernment through the guidance of the Spirit. She shares from her own experiences, having worked in Chicago with those caught in the cycle of poverty and more recently with the Peace Tax Fund. Stories which captivate and illuminate each pointed question, each kernel of truth, impart a dynamic quality to this book.

The author calls faith communities "to be divine leaven in the dough of human experience." Marian believes that "our peacemaking work and witness is our creative participation with God in fulfilling the covenant." It is because we are attempting to keep covenant with God, that we are urged to

"Hear-Trust-Obey." The reader is encouraged to take a proactive stance, asking not "Who is to blame?" but rather "Who is responsible?" Marian notes that it is crucial that we claim the biblical vision of righteousness and peace, that the new wind of the Spirit of God refresh us.

Marian Claassen Franz has written a timely, challenging and empowering book. I highly recommend this book, not only for personal reading, but also for use in Sunday school and small group learning. It offers an opportunity to ask, to study, and to respond to those questions that will not go away. Marian's gift to us is a passionate call to peacemaking.

Reviewed by Eleanor Epp, Hamilton, Ont.

Editor's note: Four other books in the Peace and Justice series were written by Mennonite women—*The Way God Fights and Doing What is Right* by Lois Barrett of Wichita, Kan., *They Loved Their Enemies* by Marian Hostetler of Orrville, Ohio, and *Jesus' Clear Call to Justice* by Dorothy Yoder Nyce of Goshen, Ind. There are currently 14 books in the series.



Letters

The article on Miscarriage (Nov./Dec. 1991) struck a chord. The author stated, "I am convinced that we do not take the common occurrence of miscarriage seriously enough." I agree. For an event that occurs so frequently, (in 10 to 20 percent of all recognized pregnancies) "there is a remarkable degree of ignorance among both parents and physicians about the causes, the process of miscarriage, and the feelings of those involved." (Borg and Lasker, 1989, p. 28).

Some comments made to me after my miscarriage were: "A miscarriage is nature's way of sparing you from an imperfect baby," "It's all for the best," "You can always have another baby." It is clear that people do not know how to respond to a miscarriage, often viewing it as a minor event or one to be welcomed since "the baby may have been deformed." However...the grief response for a neonatal death is very similar to that experienced when an older loved one dies.

I feel the Christian community needs to validate and cherish the life that is given to parents, even if only for a short while. It is important that the parents receive support for their grieving process. Support is often lacking if the parents are unable or not encouraged to have a memorial service or blessing and dedication for their loss. Thank you for dealing with this issue in a sensitive manner. I hope others may learn how to respond to this kind of experience through articles such as this.

—Susan Nickel-Brown, Chaplain-Intern, London, Ont.

I am a Catholic obstetrician who has recently completed an M.A. in theology. A friend gave me the copy of *Report on "Women in the Childbearing Years: Sharing our Stories."* It was wonderful! Congratulations on a beautiful, meaningful, Christian work. I would like to obtain copies to give to some teachers at the seminary and to some of the other OB doctors in our area.

—Barbara Denning, M.D., Metairie, La.

I recently received my copy of the *Report* on "Women in the Childbearing Years." I always find the *Report* interesting and thought-provoking, and appreciate this resource very much. I have been particularly interested in the *Sharing Our Stories* issues because I feel such issues offer much support to women, and help us understand each other. I am wondering whether you received any stories from women who had to

Women in Ministry

- **Kathy Ebersole** of Sterling, Ill., was installed as co-pastor at Hyde Park Mennonite Church in Boise, Id., on Dec. 1. She is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

- **Pam Peters** began in November as lay minister at Fort Garry Fellowship in Winnipeg.
- **Mary Steuben** is new co-pastor at Seattle (Wash.) Mennonite Church.
- **Ingrid Schultz** of Vancouver, student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, is a pastoral intern with Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Fe in the Little Village area of Chicago.
- **Florence and Weldon Schلونeger** are new co-pastors at Meadows (Ill.) Mennonite Church

work out the issue of whether or not to have children when they and their partners were not agreed. My husband does not want children, and I definitely do. This has been a very difficult and painful issue between us. I have felt very much alone in dealing with this. I would be interested in reading stories of other couples who have worked through this.

—Name withheld by request

To readers: If you would like to share your story in response to this letter, please write to the *Report* editor, and I will forward it to the letter writer. If you would additionally like your story shared in this column, please indicate that when you write.

Thank you for a top notch publication. When *Women's Concerns* arrives, I sit down and read it from beginning to end.

—Elsa Neufeld, Winnipeg, Man.

News and Verbs

- Some 27 male Mennonite leaders signed a **covenant against violence against women** at a conference on "Men Working to End Men's Violence Against Women," in February at Rocky Mountain Mennonite camp in Colorado. The men attending included churchwide administrators, conference officers, and more than a dozen pastors.
- WMSC (Women's Missionary and Service Commission of Mennonite Church) offers **scholarships to Mennonite women** at Eastern Mennonite, Hesston, Goshen and Conrad Grebel Colleges and Eastern Mennonite and Goshen Biblical Seminaries. In addition WMSC offers two scholarships for women studying in non-Mennonite graduate programs. Scholarships are for 1992-93 school year. Application deadline is June 1. For information contact WMSC, 421 S. Second St., Suite 600, Elkhart, IN 46516-3243; telephone 219-294-7131.
- A **survey of women in pastoral ministry** is being mailed to all Mennonite Church and General Conference women who have served or are serving in a congregational setting. If you have not received a survey, contact Renee Sauder, 229 NE 48th, Newton, KS 67114.
- Cathleen Hockman of Hubbard, Ore., and Washington, D.C., has been named **assistant editor of *Gospel Herald***. She will begin this summer.
- Mary Burkholder is the **new executive secretary of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada**, the joint MC-GC Conference formed by merger three years ago. She has been a teacher, served overseas in Indonesia, Zaire and Nigeria, and most recently served as pastor of Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, Ont.
- Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church **honored pastors Emma and Joe Richards** with a series of events in December. The couple retired December 31 after 23 years in the congregation.
- In August, Janet Boldt will join the faculty of Columbia Bible College in Clearbrook, B.C. as **new missions instructor**.
- Five women have formed a support group for **women in ministry in Winnipeg** (Man.) Mennonite churches. The five are Ingrid Cornies, Pam Peters, Ruth Boehm, Rhonda Warkentin, and Kristl Bartel.
- Coming soon—Occasional Papers #16, "**Peace Theology and Violence Against Women**," includes the major papers and responses presented at the Consultation on Peace Theology and Violence Against Women held at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries (AMBS) in October 1991. The event was sponsored by the AMBS Women's Advisory Committee in cooperation with the Institute of Mennonite Studies and the Peace Studies Program. Presentations were by Mary H. Schertz, Gayle Gerber Koontz, Isaac Block, Ruth Krall, and Carol Penner. Order from Institute of Mennonite Studies, 3003



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Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517. Cost per book is \$10 plus \$1.50 postage and handling.

- Goshen College has an opening for a **full-time position in music education with an emphasis on woodwinds**. Position begins August 1992. Contact: Academic Dean, Dr. John W. Eby, Goshen College, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen IN 46526; 219-535-7503.
- The Winter Lectures at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg focused on **third world women and theology**. Featured speaker was Gayle Gerber Koontz, dean of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Ind.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committee strives to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures in which men and women can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committee on Women's Concerns.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is edited by Kristina Mast Burnett. Layout by Janice Wiebe Ollenburger. Correspondence and address changes should be send to Kristina Mast Burnett, Women's Concerns, MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500.

U.S. residents may send subscriptions to the above address. Canadian residents may send subscriptions to MCC Canada, 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1. A donation of \$10 per year per subscription is suggested.

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- The Alban Institute, an ecumenical group that provides resources for churches and congregations, has **resources for women in ministry** (clergy and lay). To request a list of "Alban Resources of Special Interest to Women" contact: Publications, Alban Institute, 4125 Nebraska Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20016; telephone 800-457-2674.
- New packets on **AIDS and on abortion** are available from MCC offices. "AIDS: A Christian Response" was produced by MCC B.C. "The Resource Packet on Abortion" was produced by MCC Canada.
- **Facing the Brokenness** by K.C. Ridings is a new Herald Press book, a resource for parents whose children have been sexually abused. Cost is \$8.95.
- Do the people in your church know about **MCC's packets on abuse issues**? There are now three packets—"Purple Packet: On Wife Abuse," "Broken Boundaries: On Child Sexual Abuse," and "Crossing the Boundary: Professional Sexual Abuse." We also have bulletin insert-sized fliers available on each packet, and one flier that announces all three. One congregation we heard from arranged to have someone review the packets on each of three Sundays, and then inserted the appropriate flier in bulletins that Sunday. You may want to plan something similar for your congregation. Packets are \$5 each.



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